

# Public Service Commission of Wisconsin

Phil Montgomery, Chairperson  
Eric Callisto, Commissioner  
Ellen Nowak, Commissioner

610 North Whitney Way  
P.O. Box 7854  
Madison, WI 53707-7854

September 30, 2011

Ms. Marlene H. Dortch, Office of the Secretary  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12th Street, SW, Room TW-A306  
Washington, DC 20554

Ms. Karen Majcher, Vice President  
High Cost & Low Income Support  
Universal Service Administration Co.  
2000 L Street NW, Suite 200  
Washington, DC 20036

Transmitted electronically via email and ECFS: [hccerts@usac.org](mailto:hccerts@usac.org) and ECFS docket 96-45

Re: Annual Certification of Rate Comparability for Non-Rural  
Carriers Serving in Rural Areas

5-GF-139

CC Docket No. 96-45

Dear Ms. Dortch and Ms. Majcher:

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has adopted a requirement that state commissions must file an annual certification with the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) and the FCC regarding the comparability of rates in rural, high-cost areas served by non-rural incumbent local exchange carriers (ILECs) to urban rates nationwide.<sup>1</sup>

The FCC established a "safe-harbor" rate, below which rural and urban rates would be presumed to be comparable, without further analysis.<sup>2</sup> Since 2008 the safe-harbor rate has been \$36.52, which represents two standard deviations above the nationwide average rates for basic unlimited local service, including taxes and surcharges.

In Wisconsin, there are two non-rural ILECs: Wisconsin Bell, Inc., d/b/a/ AT&T Wisconsin (AT&T) and Frontier North, Inc., (Frontier). The Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (Commission) staff performed a rate comparability analysis, using rates as of September 2011. (See attachments.) The ranges of rates charged by AT&T and Frontier in rural areas are similar to what those companies charge in urban areas. AT&T's rates in rural areas range from \$32.59 to \$32.98, while rates in its urban areas range from \$32.58 to \$32.66. Frontier's rates in rural areas range from \$28.76 to \$34.04, while rates in its urban areas range from \$29.41 to \$34.04. These rates for unlimited service do not exceed the safe-harbor rate. There is therefore a presumption of urban-rural comparability according to the FCC's safe-harbor rules.

<sup>1</sup> In the Matter of Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service, CC Docket No. 96-45, Order on Remand, Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, and Memorandum Opinion and Order (FCC 03-249) (released October 27, 2003).

<sup>2</sup> A state may conclude that its rural rates are reasonably comparable to urban rates, even if they exceed the safe-harbor rate, but it must then fully explain its rate comparability analysis and provide data supporting its conclusion.

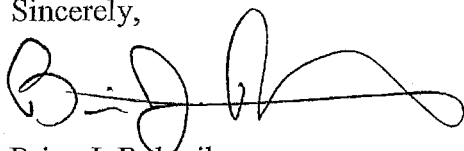
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The analysis of AT&T and Frontier rates further revealed that:

- AT&T charges a different rate, based on 911 surcharges and sales taxes, which vary by county, and are established by county governmental bodies.
- Frontier charges a different rate in each exchange, based on the relative number of access lines in the exchange and the access lines in the exchange's extended area service calling area.<sup>3</sup>

Based on all of the above, I can certify for the Commission that urban and rural rates charged by Wisconsin non-rural ILECs are comparable. Questions on this matter may be directed to me at (608) 266-1567.

Sincerely,



Brian J. Rybarik  
Administrator  
Telecommunications Division

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Certification.docm

Attachments

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<sup>3</sup> As with AT&T, rates for Frontier would also vary by county given difference in 911 surcharges and sales taxes.

Frontier North Inc.  
Effective on September 1, 2011

Comparison of Rates Charged by Frontier in  
Rural versus Urban Exchanges  
(Unlimited Usage Service)

	Rural		Urban	
	Lowest Rate for Unlimited Service	Highest Rate for Unlimited Service	Lowest Rate for Unlimited Service	Highest Rate for Unlimited Service
Unlimited Flat Rate	\$18.17	\$18.17	\$18.17	\$18.17
Extended Area Service (EAS)	\$0.00	\$4.86	\$0.60	\$4.86
Usage Charges	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Subscriber Line Charge/End User Common Line (EUCL)	\$6.50	\$6.50	\$6.50	\$6.50
Touch Tone	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Taxes	\$2.05	\$2.47	\$2.10	\$2.47
Police, Fire Protection Surcharge	\$0.75	\$0.75	\$0.75	\$0.75
911 Surcharge	\$0.35	\$0.35	\$0.35	\$0.35
Universal Service Surcharge	\$0.94	\$0.94	\$0.94	\$0.94
Local Number Portability Surcharge	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Total	\$28.76	\$34.04	\$29.41	\$34.04

**Comparison of Rates Charged by AT&T in Rural Exchanges with Nationwide Average Urban Rates  
Unlimited Usage Service**

	<u>AT&amp;T rural 9/2011</u>		<u>AT&amp;T urban 9/2011</u>			
	<u>Lowest rate for unlimited service</u>	<u>Highest rate for unlimited service</u>	<u>Lowest rate for unlimited service</u>	<u>Highest rate for unlimited service</u>		
Unlimited flat rate	<sup>1/</sup> \$ 23.00	<sup>1/</sup> \$23.00	<sup>1/</sup> \$23.00	<sup>1/</sup> \$ 23.00		
Extended area service (EAS)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -		
Usage charges	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -		
End User Common Line (EUCL)	\$ 5.06	\$ 5.06	\$ 5.06	\$ 5.06		
Touch tone	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -		
Taxes	\$ 2.39	\$ 2.44	\$ 2.39	\$ 2.44		
911 surcharge	\$ 0.16	\$ 0.50	\$ 0.15	\$ 0.18		
Universal service surcharge (Fed)	\$ 0.62	\$ 0.62	\$ 0.62	\$ 0.62		
Universal service surcharge (State)	\$ 0.61	\$ 0.61	\$ 0.61	\$ 0.61		
Fire & Police Assessment (eff 9/1/09 per WI State 2009 budget)	\$ 0.75	\$ 0.75	\$ 0.75	\$ 0.75		
Totals	\$ 32.59	\$ 32.98	\$ 32.58	\$ 32.66		

<sup>1/</sup> Complete Choice Basic Pkg. has an access line, unlt'd local, EAS & ECC usage and choice of custom calling and CNS features